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131346Z Feb 06

UNCLAS MUSCAT 000203

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD, NEA/P, AND INR/R/MR

LONDON FOR GOLDRICH

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FOREIGN PRESS CENTER FOR ASILAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [OIIP](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: Economic Hopes for Hamas, Russia Hosting Hamas, Limits of Free Expression

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Economic Hopes for Hamas  
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[1](#)1. The privately owned daily "al-Watan" published an editorial on February 8 entitled "Hamas and the Future":

"The corruption that prevailed previously in the [Palestinians'] "Fatah" government was one cause of its downfall, to Hamas' benefit. One of the new government's priorities is the "Palestinization" of its finances and economy, to counteract pressures that force Palestinians to follow undesirable policies. Palestinians are looking for leadership that can ensure a better standard of living."

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Russia Hosting Hamas  
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The government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" published on February 11 an editorial entitled "Hamas: Opening to the World":

[1](#)2. "Russia's invitation to Hamas for talks in Moscow is a major development in the group's quest to engage the world and find political partners. ... The EU and the U.S. must accept Hamas' legitimacy if they truly espouse the principle of democracy. As usual, because of its negative stance toward the Palestinians, Israel opposes Russia's invitation. Hamas' interaction with the external political environment is vital and beneficial to future planning; it yields more knowledge about other countries' foreign policies."

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Limits of Free Expression  
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[1](#)3. Also on February 11, "Oman" published an op-ed piece by Awadh Bin Said Baquair entitled "The Holocaust and Offensive Cartoons: What Is the Role of So-Called `Freedom of Expression?'"

"Some Western media have presented the dark side of the normally beneficial freedom of the press, violating the clear line between what is sacred and what is not. Insulting religions and prophets cross that line ... The EU has a moral responsibility to differentiate between freedom of expression and respect for the proper limits of discussion. Otherwise, the confrontation will continue, escalating an issue that needs to be addressed and dealt with to more dangerous levels. ... [The EU] must send a message to Denmark, Norway, and others that the Islamic world will not sit idly by; it will defend its religion and its Prophet Muhammad."

BALTIMORE